

Asheville city government is at a turning point defined by a strong dedication to collaborate on key issues facing our community, where we listen to citizens and involve them when decisions are made.

- Mayor Terry Bellamy, January 12, 2006 Community Goal Setting Forum



City of Asheville Goals for Asheville Forum

January 12, 2006 Summary

Created January 19, 2005

executive summary

This executive summary below presents common focus areas expressed by citizens at the January 12, 2006 Community Forum. The summary data is taken from each group's consensus on main priorities and goals. While every focus group presented both unique ideas and variations on shared ideas, there were a number of commonalities in their results.

#1: DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH

11 out of 11 groups (100%) included an aspect of development and/or growth as a top goal or priority. This area is particularly significant because it was the only unanimous focus. 6 out of 11 groups (55%) specifically referenced updating, reviewing or more strictly enforcing development ordinances, the UDO and/or the city's 2025 Plan. 4 out of 11 groups (36%) mentioned smart growth, limiting sprawl, and/or promoting high density and mixed use development as a priority.

#2: EMPLOYMENT, LOCAL BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

8 out of 11 groups (73%) included references to job opportunities, supporting small businesses and artisans and overall economic development. Priorities and goals included such items as creating diversified employment opportunities, ensuring livable wages, and fostering and supporting local businesses, artists and entrepreneurs. 4 out of 11 (36%) groups characterized these efforts as preserving Asheville's character/identity and avoiding large, national chains.

Tied for #3: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC/ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION

6 out of 11 groups (55%) cited the natural environment and public and alternative forms of transportation as a main goal or priority. In addition, all 6 groups linked public and alternative forms of transportation to the natural environment or vice versa. Priorities included increased city bus service; improving existing or developing more sidewalks, bike paths and trails/walkways; green building and environmentally-friendly development; improved bus amenities like covered shelters; integrating biodeisel fuel into public transportation and city vehicles; increased development of greenways and parks.

Tied for #3: PUBLIC SAFETY & DRUG ISSUES

6 out of 11 groups (55%) included public safety and/or drug enforcement or treatment as a top goal or priority. Priorities included staffing the police and fire departments, focusing on crime in public housing neighborhoods, developing drug treatment and education programs, and/or creating safe alternatives like recreation and other development programs for children and teens.

Tied for #5: HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

5 out of 11 groups (45%) included housing, affordable housing or public housing as a main focus area. Priorities included making sure a percentage of all residential development is permanently affordable, improving public housing, adjusting the threshold for what is considered to be affordable and increasing use of the Housing Trust Fund.

Tied for #5: EDUCATION & YOUTH

5 out of 11 groups (45%) cited education, youth development and activities, childcare, child safety and welfare as a top priority or goal. Groups that included these areas indicated that the city should be more involved with the school system, invest more resources in youth programs and/or address social issues that affect child welfare.

focus group summaries

priorities

goals

group one

Priority 1: Economic Development

Goal: Targeted, focused development

Goal: One-stop permitting

Goal: Private sector leadership

Priority 2: Community Building

Goal: Two-way communications system between government and community

Goal: Eliminate economic, social and racial disparity in neighborhoods

Goal: Promote unity of vision

Priority 3: Maintain Asheville's Identity

Goal: Build a green local economy

Goal: Mandatory review and compliance

Goal: Citizen oversight review process with authority

group two

Priority 1: Sustainable development, Smart Growth, Green building, clean energy, watershed protection

Goal: Mass transportation

Goal: Climate and air plan

Goal: Sidewalks

Priority 2: Racial and Economic Disparity

Goal: Economic opportunity for low wage workers

Goal: Attract non-service businesses

Goal: Provide city services in Spanish

Priority 3: Focus on Children and Youth

Goal: Affordable childcare

Goal: Education and Libraries

Goal: Address domestic violence issues

group three

Priority 1: Streets and Sidewalks

Goal: Prioritize downtown streets and side walks (enforce encroachment)

Goal: Repair existing sidewalks

Goal: Covered bus shelters

Priority 2: Review Unified Development Ordinance

Goal: No more Staples or Wal-Mart

Goal: Mixed use compatibility

Goal: Develop guiding principles about development

Priority 3: Neighborhood Safety (drugs, parks and streets)

Goal: Drug treatment - rehab and education

Goal: Safe for kids

focus group summaries

group four

priorities

goals

Priority 1: Affordable Housing

Goal: Establish a fixed number of housing units to be available for low-income families.

Priority 2: Security

Goal: More funding for police department officers with more officers and more officers walking beats.

Priority 3: Ecological goals and sustainability; establish measurable ecological goals for government and citizens.

Goal: Limit urban sprawl.

group five

Priority 1: Improved support for public safety and security and fully staffed fire and police.

Goal: Fully staff police department.

Priority 2: Improved public transportation and walkability; provide bus service on Sundays.

Goal: Actively support and implement Greenway Master Plan, Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan, 2025 Master Plan

Priority 3: Protect neighborhood integrity including no business in residential areas, lasting long-term guidelines for development and quality development and refinement of the UDO.

Goal: Permit more high density in-fill housing where there is public transportation and increase bus frequency to every 20 minutes.

group six

Priority 1: Overhaul UDO/Zoning including the 2025 Plan and strictly enforce it

Goal: Mandatory design review.

Priority 2: Public housing authority/HUD

Goal: Enforce the rules and get tough on crime.

Priority 3: Establish and promote clear channels for citizen participation in government issues.

Goal: Formalize an ongoing structure for citizen participation.

focus group summaries

group seven

priorities

Priority 1: Sustainable development

Priority 2: Public Safety

Priority 3: Housing

goals

Goal: Proper planning/smart growth.

Goal: New, green economic engines.

Goal: Ban nuclear transport.

group eight

Priority 1: Planning and Development/Zoning

Priority 2: Environmental Issues

Priority 3 (tie): Social programs

Priority 4 (tie): Economic development for small business

Goal: Greater enforcement

Goal: More power/authority

Goal: No Wal-Marts/Restrictions on big box development

Goal: Greenways

Goal: Alternative/Mass Transit/Sidewalks

Goal: Cleaner air and water

Goal: Make provisions to keep agricultural animals in the city

Goal: Youth activities and counseling programs

Goal: Economic support and programs for fixed income seniors

Goal: Regional self sufficiency

Goal: Small business development and support

group nine

Priority 1: Create equity/inclusion with an emphasis on affordable housing, homelessness, poverty/living wage, public services, quality of life in underserved areas, youth/teen programs and improving current public housing options.

Priority 2: Comprehensive environmental improvement strategy addressing clean air and water, biodeisel, bike paths, traffic calming, public transportation and parks.

Priority 3: Develop, implement and enforce a comprehensive plan for residential and commercial development that balances community and economic needs; control growth, prevent sprawl, support small and environmentally friendly business.

Goal: Increase Housing Trust Fund

Goal: Adjust formula to qualify for affordable housing

Goal: Seek funding to help fund youth and teen programs

Goal: Increase frequency and hours of bus service

Goal: Fund the existing greenway plan

Goal: Bike paths

Goal: More police in most under protected areas included substations

Goal: Enforce the UDO

Goal: Rezoning to control growth

focus group summaries

group ten

priorities

goals

Priority 1: Support locally owned businesses, the local economy and a living wage (avoid chains)

Goal: Redevelop the Eagle/Market Street area

Goal: Support local media arts production.

Priority 2: Affordable Housing/homelessness prevention/Homestead Exemption

Goal: Make 25% of all new residential development permanently affordable.

Priority 3: Education

Goal: Invest resources in youth development and empowerment programs.

group eleven

Priority 1: Responsible development

Goal: Create a development plan with teeth that preserves Asheville's assets, retains its uniqueness and promotes a locally-based identity.

Goal: Create green public transportation options (biodeisel, buses, walkways, scooters, etc.)

Priority 2: Improve job opportunities and wages

Goal: Support work of local arts organizations and artists including offering artist and artisans affordable work/live spaces and galleries.

Priority 3: Affordable Housing

focus group complete results

group one

priorities

Police, fire, trash - "basic services"
Homelessness - opportunities...
Economic development - custom to Asheville
Parking downtown
Quality of growth
Historic preservation
Sustainable 'ecological' development
Young adult retention
Affordable, efficient mass transportation
Encourage, facilitate small businesses
Maintaining Asheville's ID - 'smart growth' - 'pull to area'
Strict enforcement of UDO - confusing and conflicting
Building height restrictions
Efficient permitting department
More sidewalks
Preserve, nurture affordable neighborhoods
Land trust for affordable housing
Relocate mobile homes if eliminated
Community building
Citizen oversight commission for all functions of City of Asheville
Two-part public input hearings (public session #1, council vote session #2)
Staff 'wiggle room' in UDO - flexibility
Stop drug flow into the City

goals

Support locally owned small businesses
Keep it green & sustainable - low impact industry
Basic services
Job 'balance' wages
Knowledge bases vs. service-based growth
Business friendly government inspections, etc.
Living wage
CBD - keep chain stores out
Economic security for senior citizens
Alternative transportation - CBD-custom
Market business side of Asheville
Socially responsible 'green'
Economic development - custom to Asheville
Land trust for affordable housing
Community building
Basic services, APD, AFR, etc.
Maintain Asheville's identity

focus group complete results

group two

priorities

Mass Transportation
Focus on children and youth
Funding 2006 priorities - sidewalks
Budgeting for facilities
Bike and pedestrian friendly development
Economic opportunity for low wage workers
Control mountainside/top development
Economic Development
Affordable Housing
Attracting non-service business
Green space development
Renewed Civic Center with diverse activities
Sustainability/Green Building/ Clean energy/Watershed Protection
Cool Cities - climate and air protection
Educate youth re: hard drug addiction and rehab access
Water delivery infrastructure and quality
General development
Key city services in Spanish
New industries with affordable wage
Affordable day care and childcare
Homelessness
Domestic Violence - services for families and survivors
More utility services competition
I-26 Decision
Education/Libraries
Access to and supply of alternative fuels and engine retrofits
Retain and support locally-owned business
Racial disparity
Stop speculative grading
More citizen participation

goals

Aging population/housing
Saving and investment classes for low-income citizens
Collaborate with UNCA to increase their minority enrollment
Access to quality education
Living wage
Parks and Recreation Facilities
Healthcare disparity - under and uninsured

focus group complete results

group three

priorities

Develop the river district
Streets and sidewalks, handicapped accessibility
More affordable housing and improved public housing
Neighborhood Safety/Drug Control in
Streets and parks
Drug rehab treatment and education
Provide jobs for and educate drug dealers
Improve multi-modal transportation
Improve public education
Improve community relations particularly cultural
Police and service agencies
Improve Trash Collection
City/Development interaction - consideration for where and what is built
Review UDO
Eliminate transportation of hazardous and nuclear waste
Improve street identification and wayfinding
Improve access - both physical and communication - for all disabilities
Equal distribution of affordable housing throughout the City
Better communications between government and citizens (boards and commissions and citizens)
Environmental protection both for and from regional and local tourism, development and quality of life
Traffic light system
Mend fences with county and state (local delegation)

goals

Streets and sidewalks
Handicap ramps
Enforcement of keeping sidewalks clean
Repair existing sidewalks
Handicap access
Signage and wayfinding
Bike lanes
Prioritize downtown streets and sidewalks encroachment policies
Parks and Streets
Take kids and leave all day
Improve lighting
Drug treatment and rehab
Neighborhood watch
Bike lanes
Traffic calming
Enforce vagrancy laws
No more Wal-Mart or Staples
Mixed use/compatibility
Guiding Principles for development
Zoning for distribution of affordable housing
Protect from eminent domain
Incentives to business that bring in jobs
Education/Clarity of UDO
Bus Shelters
Stormwater maintenance

focus group complete results

group four

priorities

Balance development and sustainability
Affordable housing
Greenways
Growth and development
Define Asheville's unique identity
French broad river development t
more security
I-26 six lanes
Maintain beauty of City of Asheville
More balance toward livability over economic development

goals

Affordable housing:

more housing at French Broad river
limit luxury condos in favor of affordable housing
prohibit realtors from putting faces on signs
end homelessness
job training and development
increase area of multifamily high density homeownership
transparency in the development process
establish a fixed number of housing units to be available to low income families
establish extreme low end condos in neighborhoods

Security:

more security at French Broad River
more \$ to Police Dept. for enforcement
more officers/walking beats
more bike patrols
increase neighborhood watch
job retraining convicted criminals
citizen advisory board for police brutality

Development:

Establish ecological goals
support small business
limit urban sprawl
develop measures of sustainability
define Asheville's identity
French broad river
Ordinances to better protect character of neighborhood regarding new construction

Miscellaneous goals:

improve city transportation
become more community oriented
make Downtown Asheville more livable ;
more police, better sanitation and street cleaning, eliminate panhandling, better enforcement of sanitation ordinances
support small business
quality of life
address homelessness
geographic information systems

focus group complete results

group five

priorities

Transportation radioactive materials
City Council that is proactive with vision rather than reactionary
Fully staffed police and fire departments
Improved support for public safety and security/fully staffed
Control/minimize development
City transportation on Sundays
Housing for the homeless
Homeless off the streets
Protect neighborhood integrity; no businesses in residential areas
Lasting long-term guidelines for development
Quality Development, enforcement and refinement of the UDO
Improved Public Transportation and walkability
Protection of the natural environment

goals

Develop aggressive campaign for recruiting first responders
Fund established budgetary needs (do what you said you were going to do)
Fully staffed police department
Increased frequency of buses/every 20 minutes
Increased environmentally friendly transportation options
Develop financial incentives to ride the bus - i.e., discounts for restaurants
Actively support and implement greenway and pedestrian master plans
More police presence downtown
More green space
Publish bus schedules and simplify routes
Shift to mandatory requirements and mandatory requirements
Permit more high-density infill housing where there is public transportation

group six

priorities & goals

More responsible development
Enforcement of UDO
Enforcement of tree canopies
Increase public input in development
Housing authority/HUD: more responsible for public housing
Transparency and truth in government
Clear channels for democratic/citizen participation in government issues
Poverty, racial, education, disparity/issues
Improve community support for the quality of life for children
Increase funding for sidewalks and greenways
Civic center-arts center
Dykeman riverway plan implementation
Overhaul UDO/zoning per 2025 plan and strictly enforce

Thoughtful guidelines for development/UDO
Turn White Fawn into park
Development built out as originally approved by city with code enforcement
Move forward on the civic center with two separate facilities
Support for and attention to the arts
Keep historic Asheville, businesses, ridgeviews, quality
Zero tolerance for crime dens
Civic center/media arts should be supported
Economic diversity and affordable housing
Design standards e.g. Durham
City/county look at accommodation tax
Improve Transit System

focus group complete results

group seven

priorities

Transit
Sustainable development, i.e., big box development, education
Sidewalks
New city charter
Safe bike routes
Education
Enhanced revenue through federal and/or state appropriations
Incentives for green business
Cost of Living/Income Gap
Housing
Protect Locally-Owned Business
Parks and Green Spaces downtown
Public Safety/Nuclear Transit
Mandatory design guidelines for new development
Future vision and commitment for Asheville
Traffic and Pedestrian safety
Control and direct growth to maintain mountains
Recognize areas other than downtown

goals

More affordable units for housing
More public housing/Section 8
Incentives for green housing
Increased state/federal funding
Input from minority populations
Programs to upgrade insulation
Encourage multi-use and diversity
Incentives for clean energy
Tax breaks for locally-owned business
Expanded tax levys for big business (fair share tax)
Proper Planning
Smart Growth
Energy Efficiency
Increase state/federal funding
Solar/other new energy for public buildings
New economic engines
Build to human scale
Wise management of current resources
Awareness of history/mountains
Multi-modal and congestion transportation program
Improve public/private transportation
Sidewalks and crosswalks
Traffic Control
Common sense/nuclear crossroads (ban transport)
Bike Lanes
Increased state/federal funding for public safety
Eliminate drug dealers

focus group complete results

group eight

priorities & goals

Environmental issues
Social issues
Planning and development
Economic development specifically small businesses
Homeless issues/prevention of homelessness
Strengthen and enforce the UDO
Address the civic center
Sensitive riverfront development
Hazardous materials shipments (no nukes)
Dedicated green spaces
Small business development
Better paying jobs
Regulate big box development
Increase focus and resources on neighborhoods besides
Downtown
Lesbian gay bi/trans/queer discrimination
Attention to regional self-sufficiency and resources
Attention to downtowns historic character
Greenways and transportation options (mass transit, alternative
transportation)
Farm animals in the city limits
Support local food producers and manufacturers
Attention to seniors issues specifically economic
Attention to children's programs, counseling, and activities
Commercial zoning enhancements
Affordable housing
Pockets of poverty
Property rights
Family resource centers (like in Emma, one stop shopping for
social services)

focus group complete results

group nine

priorities

Bio-diesel, more buses, increase number of buses
Traffic calming
Bike paths, pedestrian friendly
More sidewalks
Comprehensive plan for development including comprehensive environmental impact statement
Increase opportunities for youth and teens
Increase drug enforcement policies including police sub-stations
Address the growing issue of poverty
Pursue economic development that supports small business & that are environmentally friendly
More public libraries and staff
Control growth
Affordable housing
Improve police / fire
Clean air
Prevent urban sprawl
Upgrade current housing stock
Energy conservation in municipal buildings
Living wage
Better police/community communications
Equity between communities
Implementing 10-year homelessness plan
Improve public transportation
Create equity/inclusion with emphasis on affordable housing, homelessness, poverty and living wage, public services (i.e. libraries, police), quality of life in areas unde served, improve current public housing, opportunities for youth & teen programs (i.e. substance abuse prevention, career exploration, etc.).
Comprehensive environmental improvement strategy addressing clean air/water, bio-diesel, bike paths, traffic calming, public transportation and parks.
Develop, implement/enforce a comprehensive plan for residential & commercial development that balances community & economic needs by controlled growth, preventing sprawl and economic development

goals

Increase housing trust fund
Adjust formula to qualify for affordable housing
Seek funding to help fund current youth & teen programs
Enforce existing housing code
Fund 10-year homelessness plan
Decrease cost of living by decreasing tax rate
Increase frequency of buses
Fund existing greenway plan
Bike paths
More police in the most under protected areas first including sub-stations
Enforce the UDO
Rezoning to control growth
Communicate with local business associations
Occupancy tax increase

focus group complete results

group ten

priorities

Education
Alternate Transportation
Green buildings and gardens; Earth-friendly development
Homestead Exemptions
Homeless Prevention
Affordable Housing
Greenway Development
Protect Air and Water Quality
Community/Youth Empowerment
Maintain and keep unique local businesses
Bring in environmentally friendly industries with living wage jobs
Community-oriented development
Economic Development for the arts and arts organizations
Sustainable Business Development
Support police chief's reorganization plan
Wise use of tax dollars
Proactive community input on the front end of development projects and other city projects
Small business development
Support for first responders
Access to transportation - public transportation, sidewalks, greenways, bike paths, etc.
Safe and efficient public transportation
Avoid national chains beyond what we have now
Better strategy for drug problems
Economic viability for city government
Enhanced quality of life for residents
Involve international residents
Child welfare

goals

Redevelop Eagle/Market Street area
Support artistic and cultural heritage
Increase pay for police officers
Ensure zoning protects integrity of neighborhoods
More sidewalks
More youth empowerment programs in community centers and schools
Protect the natural viewshed from buildings
Better roads
Senior Property Tax Exemptions
Update 2025 plan and improve communications

focus group complete results

group eleven

priorities

Jobs
Health Insurance
Higher-paying jobs
Transportation
Economic Development
Infrastructure
Citizens Oversight
Homelessness
Sustainability
Downtown Development
Local, small business
Clean Air and clean water
Preserve green space
Higher Wages
Affordable Housing
Support Local Business
Planned Development
Alternative Transportation
Uniting the community
Improving Quality of Life
Empowered Design Review
Committee
Managed Growth/Maintain
Uniqueness
Public Safety
Mandatory scale and height
guidelines
Natural Resource Protection
Preservation of Natural and Built
Environment
Smart Growth

goals

Involve city staff in public education.
Increase Housing Trust Fund.
Promote a living wage.
Reduce number of people without health insurance.
Recruit other industries other than tourism and service industries.
Encourage innovative downtown development.
Limit big box stores.
Preserve natural resources - i.e., the rivers.
Endorse the recommendations of the Downtown Commission regarding changes to the UDO.
Maintain uniqueness and identity of downtown. Maintain cultural uniqueness.
Bring imagination to transportation options.
Promote historical restoration and preservation.
Save the woods at Richmond Hill.
Create intra-city recreational competitions aimed at teams - reduce juvenile delinquency, obesity, etc.
Control development on the Swannanoa River.
Implement all Downtown Social Task Force recommendations.
Zone downtown for mandatory aesthetic review
Green public transit options - biodeisel, walking, bikes, scooters, etc.
Create mechanisms for city departments to work together for long-term planning and ongoing projects/encourage community access to that body.
Revamp I-26 connector project/free up Highway Trust Fund so we can redevelop in a better way besides 8 lanes; Smoky Park Highway; resolution from City Council opposing 8 lanes.
Protect neighborhoods from commercial intrusions.
Increase stock and options for affordable housing.
Support people in low-income housing instead of policing them.
Recruit and retain minority teachers, especially African American teachers.
Have a train be a form of transportation to and from Asheville.
Increase city staff especially in the planning department to address the increase in permits.
Recruit higher-paying businesses.
Eliminate the transport of nuclear material around Asheville.
Free bus fares and increased bus service.
Enact a program for accessibly priced housing for moderate incomes.
Adopt a long-term infrastructure improvement plan including specified funding and a reasonable timetable.

appendix: written comments

Citizens that were unable to attend the forum or wanted to supplement their participation submitted their input in writing.
Those submissions are reproduced in this appendix.